

# Ruuti participation framework for young people of Helsinki

## Name of the organisation

Helsingin kaupunki, nuorisopalvelut

## Website of the organisation

<http://munstadi.fi/en/>

## Location of the organisation

Konepajankuja 1 A, 00099 Helsinki, Finland

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## Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Inclusion
- Active citizenship/activism
- Youth work in urban areas
- Planning
- Policymaking

## Good practice category

## Good practice aim & purpose

Ruuti is a participation system for young people in Helsinki. It embraces diversity and creates opportunities for young people to promote the issues that matter to them, in a way they feel is their own. Ruuti is targeted mainly for young people aged 13–17, of whom there are 26,000 currently living in Helsinki. Ruuti has existed in Helsinki from 2011. Since then, Ruuti has diversified, expanded and established its place in the operations of the City organisation. Currently the Culture and Leisure Division, entailing the Youth Services of the city, is in charge of developing and implementing Ruuti. Development and implementation is done in close cooperation with the Education Division of the city. Ruuti framework is part of the City's recently created system of participation and interaction, and all four divisions of the city participate in implementing it. Ruuti's goal is to provide each young person in Helsinki with at least one instance a year where they feel they can make a difference. To achieve this goal, the participation system must enable and support various ways for young people to participate and influence. Ruuti operates according to five principles: 1) promotion of influencing and participation skills, 2) equal opportunities and equality, 3) working for the common good, 4) regionality and working together, and 5) multiformity of participation.

## Good practice description

*Please describe your good practice based on the above given information (Explain your practice as*

*such, in 'technical' terms and as clear and simple as possible.)*

Ruuti has four operating methods: support for independent activities, representative activities, co-planned activities, and event-focused activities. In practice this means different type of activities:

1. Young people's initiatives mean the initiatives submitted by Helsinki residents aged 13–17 regarding the City's operations. A young person can submit an initiative on their own or together with multiple young people. The young people's initiatives may be related to local or city-wide matters, public services in their area or other topics that affect young people's lives. The purpose of the young people's right of initiative is to encourage and support young people's participation in decision-making in society. At the same time, the initiatives also provide City divisions with information about young people's wishes and goals. A young person sending in an initiative will always receive a personal response from the Mayor or a Deputy Mayor regarding the initiative.
2. Supporting young people's independent activities. Youth Services offer Helsinki-based youth activity groups various kinds of help and support in forms of monetary grants, guidance, equipment and space.
3. The Voice of the Young Editorial Board is a part of the Ruuti system. Media and influencing through media are an integral part of civil society. The purpose of the Editorial Board is to draw attention to topics and opinions that are important for young people in public discourse through journalism. It also allows young people to have new, positive roles in media. Articles written by young people are published by the highest-volume media in Finland: Helsingin Sanomat, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, MTV3 and Suomen Kuvalehti. The young people are supported by two professional journalists who are familiar with the methods of youth work. The group is open to all young people in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area aged 13–20.
4. Helsinki Youth Council. The Local Government Act in Finland requires each municipality to have a youth participation channel. The Helsinki Youth Council is an elected group of thirty young people aged 13–17. Their task is to ensure that the voice of young people is heard and that young people can participate and make a difference in the decision-making and planning, implementation and monitoring of the various divisions in Helsinki. There are many established operating methods in the co-operation between the Youth Council and the City organisation. The Mayor and the Deputy Mayors meet the members of the Youth Council regularly. The Youth Council includes four division groups, according to the city's organizational structure. The Executive Directors of each division are responsible for convening and supporting these theme groups consisting of Youth Council members. From 2019, representatives of the Youth Council have the right to be present at and participate in the discussions of all the City's four division committees.
5. In Helsinki, Pupil and student body activities are seen and developed as part of the Ruuti framework. The comprehensive schools and secondary schools of the City of Helsinki have pupil and student bodies, the purpose of which is to promote young people's participation and influencing. The schools promote the voices of children and young people, as well as the participation of their pupils and students in the activities and development of their schools.
6. Participatory budgeting with the youth. RuutiBudjetti is a participatory budgeting model, created in 2013, aimed at upper stage comprehensive school students. RuutiBudjetti is run by 16 local youth work units of the Youth Services of Helsinki, in close cooperation with the comprehensive schools of each area. Yearly around 11 000 young citizens from approximately 70 different schools take part in RuutiBudjetti. Through RuutiBudjetti, young people can present ideas, work on proposals and vote and negotiate on how the City resources are allocated for the

development of youth leisure activities, hobbies, areas and the City as a whole. RuutiBudjetti provides young people with direct power in the planning and decisions related to common matters that affect to young people – but it also provides the City organisation with up-to-date information and know-how to allocate resources where young people need them. RuutiBudjetti is an established form of youth work in Helsinki, which focuses on participation, civil and democratic education, co-operation and working for the common good.

*Please describe eventual challenges and problems related to the creation, implementation, and/or running of your good practice? (Explain the eventual difficulties that you have come across, so that others know what to think about if they want to implement your practice.)*

Changing the mindset of both the Youth Services' staff and the city's organization as a whole towards including young people in planning, decision-making and evaluation.

*Please give the names, roles and tasks of eventual partners involved in the creation, implementation and/or running of your good practice.*

Mikko Vatka, Director of Youth Affairs, Youth Services of Helsinki. Katri Kairimo, Area Manager, Youth Services of Helsinki. Responsible of the Ruuti framework. Johanna Laukkanen, Planning Officer, Youth Services of Helsinki. Responsible of development and coordination of the Ruuti framework. All of the Youth Service's managers and staff are involved in Ruuti operations in one way or another. Large part of the youth workers of the city are engaged in carrying out different operations of Ruuti (such as planning and implementing local participatory budgeting and arranging Youth Council elections) on daily or weekly basis.

*Please give an overview of the resources needed in order to establish and run your good practice. (Please describe the human, financial and other resources that are needed. Please also explain if you have got external financing from sources available for others, and if so, from what funding scheme(s).)*

Since Ruuti is more of a cross-sectoral framework and collection of practices and tools than a single practice or service, this is difficult to explain. Leading the development of Ruuti falls under the responsibilities of one of the Area Managers of the Youth Services, which in the current organizational structure is part of the Culture and Leisure Division. There are two planning officers working in this Area Manager's service area, one of who is responsible of development and coordination of the whole Ruuti framework and cooperation between city's divisions as well as of developing and coordinating RuutiBudjetti, and other who is responsible of developing and maintaining the youth initiatives service. There are two youth workers working full-time with the Youth Council. Their task is for example to ensure that all the members with different abilities and skills find their own way to participate. They help and support the Youth Council daily in their various endeavours. The Voice of the Young Editorial Board is also supported full-time by two youth workers. However, the main human resource in executing Ruuti are the approximately 300 youth workers working for the city of Helsinki. They are, in their own units, responsible for modifying and executing the processes of participatory budgeting each year, and for arranging Youth Council elections biannually in all of the +120 schools that have youth of Youth Council voting age (13-17). Through education and peer-to-peer learning in youth engagement, the youth services is encouraging the youth workers to change their mindsets towards enabling and supporting. Monetary resources of Ruuti also consist of different budgets. In RuutiBudjetti, the participatory budgeting for the youth, the participants get to influence on each local

youth work unit's budget and action plan every year. In RuutiBudjetti, also the working hours of the youth workers is under negotiation: the process guides the allocation of youth workers' working hours according to the results. In addition to this, 150 000 euros of the common budget of the Youth Services is shared yearly among the more expensive projects created by the youth in the RuutiBudjetti process. These are projects, that are too big to be executed alone with the smaller budgets of local youth work units. As part of the city's subsidiary system, the Youth Services are responsible of supporting youth groups in their projects. Last year the total sum of project grants for youth groups was 85,000 euros.

### **Good practice result & concrete effects**

*For young people:*

Provides young people various opportunities, forums, tools and channels to both influence decision-making on different levels and learn about decision-making and about public services and allocation of public resources.

*For youth workers:*

Changing the mindset from "working for" towards "enabling and doing with".

*For your organisation as such:*

Provides the organisation with up-to-date information on young people's wishes, worries and goals. Helps allocate resources where young people need them.

*For youth work in general:*

Changing the mindset from "working for" towards "enabling and doing with". Education for democracy and active citizenship.

*For society/your community in general:*

Changing the mindset from "working for" towards "enabling and doing with". Education for democracy and active citizenship.

### **Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work**